



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Tim Bishop

**Comments at Environmental Protection Agency Public Hearing on Draft Environmental Impact Statement
on Long Island Sound Dredge Spoil Dumping**

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Charles B. Wang Asian American Center at SUNY-Stony Brook

I would like to thank the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers for holding this additional public hearing.

At the request of my office and the community, the EPA not only extended the comment deadline on its Draft Environmental Impact Statement from November 17 to December 15, but they also agreed to hold a second public hearing on Long Island.

Of course, it comes as a surprise to many people that this is the second public hearing, and not the first. Very few people knew about the first hearing, which was held here on September 30. In fact, throughout this process, I have been concerned by the lack of information to the community. It has definitely been an eye-opener, and I intend to work with community leaders and government officials to make sure that we improve community involvement as this process moves forward.

I would like to thank members of the community for coming to this hearing. It is very important for the EPA to understand that Long Islanders care about the quality of the Sound, so I am glad that you are here to let your voices be heard and let the EPA know what you think about this plan.

I would particularly like to thank the fishing community for joining us today; some of who have come all the way from Montauk. The fact that they have come so far for a few moments of your attention shows how important this issue is to our community.

I am here to express my serious concerns with the Draft Environmental Impact Statement to designate permanent dredge disposal sites in Central and Western Long Island Sound.

Long Island's past and future are bound together by the water that surrounds us. We cannot afford pollution. After taking so many steps forward to protect the Long Island Sound over the past several years, this plan to dump tons of contaminated dredge waste is a giant leap back.

At the heart of this plan is an effort to dump up approximately 20 million cubic yards of dredge spoil into the Sound over the next 20 years by designating permanent dump sites for dredge spoil. This waste would primarily come from large dredging projects in industrial Connecticut Harbors.

I understand that each dredging project will be assessed on its own merits and that each batch of material will be tested. But what this plan essentially means is that our community will spend the next 20 years on the defensive. Rather than working to improve the Long Island Sound, we will spend the next 20 years locked in a series of pitched defensive battles, working project by project to keep the most hazardous material out of our water.

It should not be the goal of EPA to minimize harm, instead it should be the goal of the EPA to eliminate the long-term disposal of dredged material into Long Island Sound.

As many people here can attest, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is a daunting document. However, a few things stuck out for me.

One is that the EPA's own data shows that at historical dumping sites in the Sound, there is far greater accumulation of harmful contaminants like mercury, copper, chromium, and lead, than are found on average in the Sound. And while we can work project-by-project to try to minimize environmental damage, I am extremely concerned about the effects of bioaccumulation. Considering that we still don't know all the causes behind the lobster die-off, when it comes to bioaccumulation, we never know what will break the camel's back when it comes to the water quality of the Sound.

I am also concerned that this study seems to be a very long justification for a conclusion that was reached well in advance. The EPA seems to have approached this process like Sherlock Holmes, eliminating every possibility, until the only remaining conclusion was to dump in the Sound. Specifically, there seems to have been very little real consideration given to disposal of dredge spoil at open water or ocean sites outside of the Long Island Sound. There also seems to have been very little consideration of land disposal sites.

I understand that one of the major considerations is cost. However, there will be a major cost to our community if we allow massive dumping into the Sound. The cost to our fishermen has already been catastrophic. Listen to the fishermen and lobstermen, they will tell you their personal stories about the impact that previous dredging projects may have had in the Sound.

I would also remind you that one of Long Island's biggest industries is tourism. Our beaches and the quality of our environment attract people to our area.

When we talk about costs, we need consider those costs. We also need to measure the loss to our heritage. Fishing is not just another industry, it is vital to Long Island's character. And when we pollute our water, when we have lobsters with shell rot, we lose something far greater than money, we lose a vital part of Long Island's history. And believe me, when it's gone, it's never coming back.

We need to go back to the drawing board and consider long-term alternatives other than massive dumping into the Long Island Sound. As a member of the House Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment, I am willing to play any role I can to look at alternatives and protect the Sound. I understand that these dredging projects need to go forward, and Long Island certainly benefits from dredging. However, I cannot sit idly by and allow this process to move forward unchecked.

I hope that everyone here continues to stay involved and make your voice heard, because we need people to understand how much we care about the Sound, and that we will continue to fight-project by project if need be because the Long Island Sound is in our blood, and we will do whatever we can to protect it.

Thank you for your time and for listening to the community.